

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:**September 21, 1998**

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LAST WEEK:

HOUSE NAMES CONFEREES FOR AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS - INSTRUCTS CONFEREES TO REGARD EMERGENCY SPENDING AS OFF-BUDGET- On Tuesday, the House of Representatives named Conferees for the Agriculture Appropriations Bill, H.R. 4101. In addition, the House passed a resolution encouraging the House Conferees to regard the emergency spending provisions of the bill as off-budget. This means that the funding allotted for emergency situations would not count against the federal deficit. The Senate's version of H.R. 4101 contains a \$500 million package to aid the crisis in farm prices and productivity. The following members were appointed to the Conference Committee:

Republicans

Joe Skeen (NM)
 James Walsh (NY)
 Jay Dickey (AR)
 Jack Kingston (GA)
 George Nethercutt (WA)
 Henry Bonilla (TX)
 Tom Latham (IA)

Democrats

Marcy Kaptur (OH)
 Vic Fazio (CA)
 Jose Serrano (NY)
 Rosa DeLauro (CT)
 David Obey (WI)

The following list of Senators was named to the Conference Committee:

Republicans

Thad Cochran (MS)
 Arlen Specter (PA)
 Kit Bond (MO)
 Slade Gorton (WA)
 Mitch McConnell (KY)
 Conrad Burns (MT)
 Ted Stevens (AK)

Democrats

Dale Bumpers (AR)
 Tom Harkin (IA)
 Herb Kohl (WI)
 Pat Leahy (VT)
 Barbara Boxer (CA)
 Robert Byrd (WV)

The Conference Committee is scheduled to meet on Wednesday, September 23rd. A time and location of the Conference has not been announced.

LEGISLATION OF NOTE-

The following bills of significance to NRCS and conservation were recently introduced:

Bill	Member	Purpose
H.R. 4356	English (PA)	To amend the Surface Mining Control Act of 1977 to assure that the full amount deposited in the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund is spent for the purposes for which it was established.
H.R. 4409	Lucas (OK)	To amend the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to provide cost-share assistance for the rehabilitation of structural measures constructed as part of the water resource projects previously funded by the Secretary under such Act or related laws.
H.R. 4407	Herger (CA)	Biomass Equity Act of 1998. Provides tax credits for electricity produced from Biomass.

SENATE AGRICULTURE RELIEF ACT REJECTED -

On Monday, The Senate moved to table or kill, an amended offered by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) to the Interior Appropriations Bill, that contained a multi-billion dollar package for assisting farmers who are in crisis because of natural conditions or low prices. The amendment focused upon Marketing Assistance Loans, Emergency Storage Payments, Reserve Inventories, and also a provision dealing with meat labeling. Members of Congress and the Administration have stated that additional emergency farm aid packages will be considered before the 105th Congress adjourns.

CONTINUING RESOLUTION PASSED AND SENT TO THE PRESIDENT

On Thursday, Congress voted unanimously to provide nine extra days to enact fiscal 1999 appropriations legislation. The House voted 421-0 to pass a continuing resolution (CR) which would keep the federal government in operation until October 9, 1998. The Senate cleared the measure (H.J. RES. 128) on a voice vote without debate. President Clinton is expected to sign the measure.

ANIMAL FEEDING OPERATIONS STRATEGY BRIEFINGS -

Beginning on Wednesday, September 16th, staff from NRCS and EPA briefed House and Senate Authorizing Committees on the recently announced Unified Strategy to address environmental concerns of Animal Feeding Operations. Presenters expressed to the committees that the Draft Strategy represents the combined views of both USDA and EPA on the issue. They also underscored that the Strategy is out in Draft and will be available for public comment for 120 days. Committee staff asked questions regarding how the strategy would be carried out in various parts of the country. Several staffers expressed

concern over the workload that the Strategy would cause for NRCS and the cost for producers who get nutrient management plans from the private sector.

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THIS WEEK -

CONFERENCE ON AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS-

Conferees from the House and Senate will meet to resolve differences between both Chambers' passed versions of H.R. 4101, the Agriculture Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 1999.

Sept. 23 (Time and Location to be announced)

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LOOKING AHEAD -

FLOOD PREVENTION MEASURE-

The Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee (Chairman Goodlatte, R-VA) will hold a hearing to discuss H.R. 4128, a bill to amend the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act to ensure that States and local governments can quickly and safely remove flood debris so as to reduce the risk and severity of subsequent flooding. Witnesses from the Department of Agriculture have not yet been named.

October 2 10:00 am 1300 Longworth Building

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